



HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

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HFD and Harris County Recognize Arson Awareness Week, May 1-7, 2005

In recognition of National Arson Awareness Week, May 1-7, the Houston Fire Department and the Harris County Emergency and Fire Services Department are drawing attention to the ultimate losses of arson. One of the most tragic factors is that since 2000 four Houston firefighters have died in the line of duty while battling fires caused by arson. A press conference to emphasize the losses of arson will be held, **Tuesday, May 3, 2005 at 10:00 a.m.** at the Glenwood Cemetery Firefighter monument (2525 Washington Avenue).

HFD Fire Chief Phil Boriskie and Harris Co. Fire Marshal Mike Montgomery will send the message that arson does not pay. It costs property, injury and life. It costs us all will expenses for the fire department resources, persons to investigate, less dollars on the tax rolls and higher insurance premiums. We all pay. Arson is not only a fire department problem but a community problem.

Surprisingly for this serious crime, adults are not the only offenders. Youth account for half of the fires set in Houston. Many young children cannot comprehend that it only takes one match or one lighter to burn down a whole house and many adults cannot comprehend that their children can start a fire that will take away everything they own or worse, their lives. Recently, Houston had a \$1 million dollar loss apartment fire this year started by a four year old. The littlest hands can make the biggest fires.

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The Houston Fire Department needs the community to help us stop this problem. Arson fires are preventable fires. If you know anything about an intentionally set fire or suspicious activities, inform the Houston Arson and Investigation Division at 713-865-9000. If you are a parent and you know your child has played with lighters or matches, call the HFD Firestoppers Program at 713-495-7929, a free, confidential one-to-one educational program for youth from ages 2-17 that have played with fire. Don't wait until for an out-of-control fire. Fire is unpredictable and in each fire we never know how much we will lose.

- A proclamation from the City of Houston will be read at the City Council Meeting also on May 3, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. in recognition of Arson Awareness Week.
- Members of the community are invited to the free Fire Safety Night at the Children's Museum (1500 Binz) on Thurs., May 5, 2005.